

Remarks**I. Status of claims**

Claims 1-23 and 45-61 were previously canceled. Claims 36-44 are canceled herein without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 24-35 are pending.

II. Claim rejections

Claims 36-41 and 43-44 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over DE 196 34 499 (DE '499) in view of US 5,183,616 to Hedrick.

Claims 36-41 and 43-44, along with claim 42, have been canceled in order to expedite prosecution and achieve allowance of the application, rendering the rejection moot. Claims 36-44 will be pursued in a separately filed continuation application.

III. Conclusion


Applicants believe that the claims now pending in this patent application are in immediate condition for allowance. Favorable consideration is respectfully requested. If any further questions arise, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' representative at the number listed below.



Respectfully submitted,

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